Here are two views of me and Kevin at the Portsmouth minicon back on May 5, 1984 -- obviously having a great time!

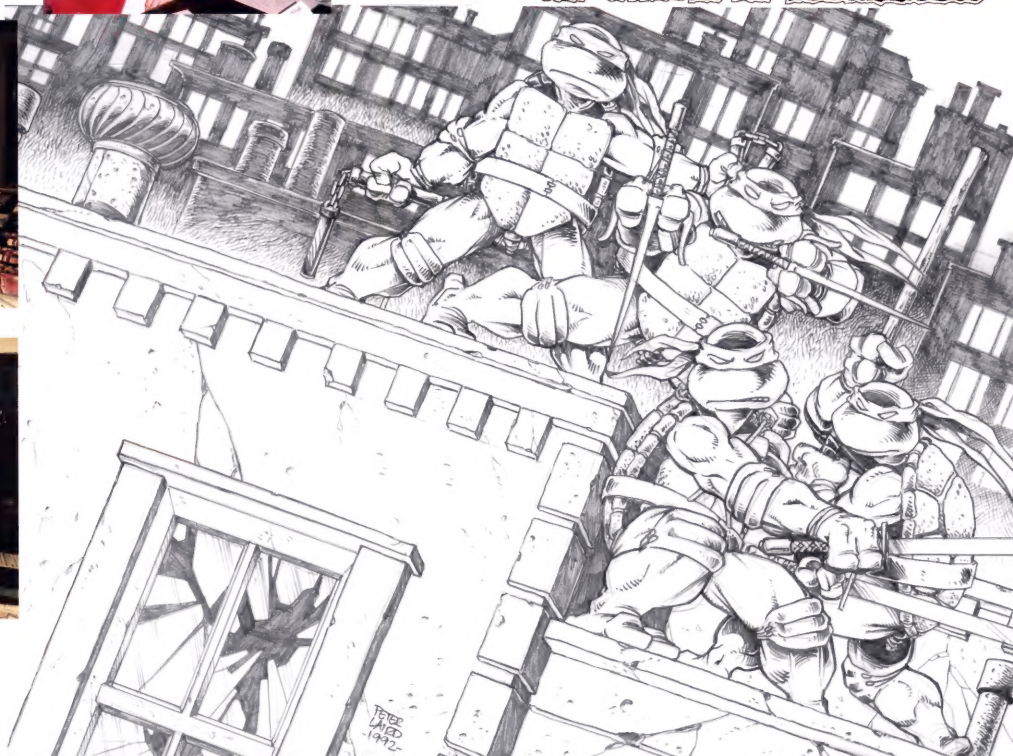
The boxes in this photo are filled with freshly-printed copies of the first edition of TMNT #1. They're stacked in one corner of the living room of the Dover, NH house where we conceived of and drew all of that first issue.

SPECIAL PBBZ COMIC CON & small press fest LIMITED EDITION

MIRAGE PUBLISHING

VOL.1 #1 REPRINT

EASTMAN & LAIRD'S TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES®



CREDITS

PETER LAIRD and KEVIN EASTMAN: WRITING and INKING
PETER LAIRD: TONING, LETTERING and COVER ARTWORK
KEVIN EASTMAN: COVER LOGO

Hard to believe sometimes, but it's been nearly twenty-one years since the Turtles first appeared in public. Back in 1984, on May 5, Kevin Eastman and I attended the Portsmouth, New Hampshire comic show put on by Ralph DiBernardo, held at the Holiday Inn on the traffic circle (don't know if that hotel is still there).

We'd been to one of Ralph's shows before (as customers), and were familiar with him from his comics-laden tables at a regular weekend flea-market held in Portsmouth. But this time we had purchased table space, and were anxious (and a bit nervous) to gauge public reaction to our new Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles comic book. I don't remember many details of that show, other than a general feeling of relief that we weren't laughed out of the room and people seemed to dig it, for the most part. And we got to hang out with Steve Woron, a nice guy who had his own self-published comic, "The Survivors", which he was selling at the show.

It wasn't long after that show that I moved to Connecticut, and Kevin back to Maine, and if we hadn't kept in touch via short phone calls (long distance charges!) and through the mail (no Internet back then), I might not be writing this now. But we did keep in touch, and later that same year, after several months of mailing pages back and forth to each other, we had produced issue #2 of TMNT... and we were off and running. Sometimes it seems like we never stopped... maybe just slowed down a little.

Now I'm back in Portsmouth, doing another show with Ralph. A lot has changed since that first show -- the Turtles have been through several different incarnations in mass media (two animated TV shows and three live-action movies), and are preparing to go into a realm which I don't think I could have even dreamed about back in 1984 -- a full-length CGI animated movie in the works scheduled for a 2007 theatrical release. And since I bought out his interest in the TMNT property back in 2000, Kevin is no longer in the picture. But it's probably a good time to point out that without him, there would never have been a TMNT comic, and thus none of the cartoons, movies, or vast number of licensed products. So... "mad props" to ya, KBE!

Fans of the original TMNT comics will note some differences in this reprint... the result of a long-term project of mine wherein I am doing new computer tones to replace the old duoshade, as well as new lettering, and a few small dialogue tweaks. This is the first time this "new look" has seen print.

-- Peter Laird

P.S. I asked Ralph to reminisce about the old days, and he graciously provided the following essay. Enjoy! (Though in the interest of full disclosure and accuracy, I believe Kevin still has most of his hair.)

When you stand in the presence of greatness, will you recognize it? Who knew? Who could have seen it coming? For all my insight, I sure didn't. In my opinion, the single most unpredictable event in the history of comic books, and I was right there in the middle of it. In the Dover, NH area, we take great pride in being the true home to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. I take great pride in having been there from the start.

I first met Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman 23 years ago, plus or minus. I was just a high-school kid selling comic books at a local flea market. There was no comic book shop in the area. Just me and my six tables of new comics and back issues, one day a week. Peter and Kevin were regular customers. Two guys who stopped by almost every Sunday to pick up new comics, maybe a back issue or two, and to talk about comic books. We all had hair. Lots of hair. Perhaps Peter had less than the rest of us, but I know it we all had hair that was LONG in back. We were all the Mullet Kings. Hair! Today the three of us have none.

(continued on inside back cover)

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES® Volume One, Number 1, Special PBBZ Comic Con & Small Press Fest reprinting. Print run for this edition is limited to 3000 copies. April 2005. Published by Mirage Publishing, Inc. P.O. Box 417, Haydenville, MA 01039. Any similarities between characters, names, persons and/or institutions is not intended and if it exists is purely coincidental. TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES® (including all prominent characters featured in this issue) and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of Mirage Studios, Inc. unless otherwise noted. All contents ©2005 Mirage Studios, Inc. unless otherwise noted. Letters to TMNT and Mirage become the property of Mirage and are assumed to be intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for such purposes. TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES® created by Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman.

"MY NAME IS ***LEONARDO***. MY BROTHERS AND I MADE A WRONG TURN SOMEWHERE... NOW WE'RE ***TRAPPED***, OUR BACKS TO THE WALL IN THIS TRASH-STREWN ALLEY."

"BARRING THE WAY OUT ARE FIFTEEN MEMBERS OF THE ***PURPLE DRAGONS***, THE TOUGHEST STREET GANG ON THE EAST SIDE. THE ONLY WAY THEY'LL LET US OUT OF HERE... IS IF WE'RE ***DEAD!***"

"I HOLD MY ***KATANA*** IN A RELAXED READY POSITION. TO MY LEFT, ***DONATELLO*** AND ***MICHELANGELO*** FOLLOW SUIT WITH ***BO STAFF*** AND ***NUNCHAKUS***. WITH HIS ***SAI***, ***RAPHAEL*** GUARDS MY RIGHT SIDE -- I SENSE HIS BODY QUIVERING WITH TENSE ENERGY, WAITING TO BE TRIGGERED INTO SAVAGE, SLASHING ***RELEASE!***"

YOU'RE ***DEAD***, FREAKS!!!
NOBODY TRESPASSES ON PURPLE DRAGON TURF AND GETS AWAY WITH IT... ***ESPECIALLY*** WHEN THEY'RE WEARING STUPID ***TURTLE COSTUMES!***

"HE'S *WRONG*...

... WE'RE NOT WEARING *COSTUMES*."

EASTMAN AND LAIRD'S TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

HEY--!

HERE THEY COME! BLAST 'EM!

"THESE GUYS ARE YOUNG, BUT THEY'RE NO ***ROOKIES***. THEY'VE BEEN AROUND, ***TOUGHENED*** BY THE STREETS. THEY'VE ***FOUGHT*** AND ***BEAT*** EVERYTHING ON TWO LEGS IN THIS AREA... EXCEPT ***US.***"

"WE HIT THEM ***AIRBORNE***. I TAKE OUT ***TWO*** ON THE WAY DOWN. DONATELLO NAILS A ***THIRD*** WITH HIS BO."

"THE PUNKS DON'T WASTE MUCH TIME ON ***HAND-TO-HAND.*** THEY BREAK INTO SMALL GROUPS..."

"... AND OPEN UP WITH THEIR ***ARTILLERY!***"

"RAPHAEL ***LOVES*** THIS STUFF. HIS ***SAIS*** FLASH AS HE LEAPS..."

"... THE THREE TOUGHS DON'T EVEN SEE THAT."

W-WHO *ARE* THESE GUYS --?!

DON'T KNOW... SOME KINDA *FREAKS!*

BUT EVEN FREAKS CAN BLEED... *CUT* 'EM!

"YES... WE CAN *BLEED*..."

"... AND SO CAN *YOU!*"

"OUR FIRST MAJOR ***SKIRMISH*** IS OVER, AND WE ARE STILL ***STANDING***. OUR TRAINING HAS SERVED US ***WELL***... MASTER ***SPLINTER*** WILL BE PLEASED."

"A POLICE SIREN WAILS CLOSE BY, COMING ***FAST***. WHEN THEY ARRIVE, THEY WILL FIND ONLY WHAT IS ***LEFT*** OF THE PURPLE DRAGON GANG."

POLICE

"WE DO NOT LIKE TO RUN FROM THOSE WHO COULD BE OUR ***ALLIES***, BUT THEY WOULD NOT ***UNDERSTAND*** US."

"THE ***STORM DRAINS*** BECKON... WE ARE NEVER ***FAR*** FROM A MEANS OF ***ESCAPE*** OR ***CONCEALMENT***..."

"... FOR WE ARE TRAINED IN THE ART OF ***NINJITSU***..."

"WE STRIKE ***HARD***, AND ***FADE*** AWAY..."

"... INTO THE *NIGHT.*"

"THE *STORM DRAINS* AND *SEWERS* ARE OUR HOME. WE KNOW EVERY INCH OF THESE *SUBTERRANEAN* PASSAGES."

KLAK!

CREEEEEEKKK!

"FOR ALL OF OUR YEARS WE HAVE DWELLED IN THESE *DARK* DEPTHS..."

"... LEARNING, GROWING, BUILDING."

AH, MY SONS... YOU RETURN AT *LAST*. YOU HAVE FOUGHT...?

AND *WON*, MASTER SPLINTER... AGAINST *FIFTEEN* FOES!

YOU HAVE DONE *WELL*. YOUR *NINJA SKILLS* ARE NEAR THEIR *PEAK*.

I HAVE *FORSEEN* THIS NIGHT FOR MANY YEARS. NOW IT IS *TIME*...

... TIME FOR YOU TO BE TOLD OF THE *MISSION* FOR WHICH I HAVE *TRAINED* YOU THESE PAST THIRTEEN YEARS.

TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF THIS MISSION, I MUST SPEAK OF *MY* LIFE, AND HOW *YOU* CAME TO BE.

MY TALE BEGINS SOME TWENTY YEARS AGO...

... I WAS A YOUNG RAT, A ***PET*** BOUGHT AND CARED FOR BY MY BELOVED MASTER, ***HAMATO YOSHI***. WHILE MY MASTER WAS TRAINING, MY CAGE WAS KEPT IN HIS ***DOJO***, AND IT ***AMUSED*** HIM TO SEE ME ***MIMIC*** HIS MOVEMENTS...

... BUT IT WAS ***MORE*** THAN MERE MIMICRY. SLOWLY, THROUGH OBSERVATION, I LEARNED HIS ART -- THE MYSTERIOUS MARTIAL ART OF ***NINJITSU!*** I COULD NOT HAVE HAD A BETTER ***TEACHER***, FOR IT WAS SAID THAT HAMATO YOSHI WAS THE GREATEST ***SHADOW WARRIOR*** OF HIS CLAN...

YOSHI WAS ONE OF THE FAMOUS ***FOOT CLAN***, THE MOST FEARED ***WARRIORS*** AND ***ASSASSINS*** IN ALL JAPAN. ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE FOOT CLAN -- ***OROKU NAGI*** -- WAS YOSHI'S RIVAL. HE AND MY MASTER COMPETED ***FIERCELY*** IN ALL THINGS... ESPECIALLY FOR THE ***LOVE*** OF A YOUNG WOMAN, ***TANG SHEN***.

BOTH TRIED TO WIN HER ***HEART***, BUT FROM THE START SHE LOVED ONLY ***ONE*** -- MY MASTER, HAMATO YOSHI.

NAGI WAS INSANELY ***JEALOUS***. ONE FATEFUL NIGHT, HE WENT TO TANG SHEN'S HOME AND ***DEMANDED*** THAT SHE LOVE HIM. SHEN ***REFUSED***. IN A RAGE, NAGI BEGAN TO ***BEAT*** HER. AT THAT SAME MOMENT, YOSHI ENTERED THE ROOM...

... AND SAW NAGI POISED TO ***STRIKE!***

SHEN -- !

HAH, YOSHI DOG! IF *I* CAN'T HAVE HER... THEN ***NO ONE*** WILL!

"YOSHI'S WORLD ***VANISHED*** IN A RED HAZE..."

"... AND WHEN IT CLEARED, NAGI WAS NO MORE."

BUT YOSHI'S ***SHAME*** WAS GREAT -- BY KILLING ANOTHER MEMBER OF HIS CLAN, HE HAD ***DISHONORED*** HIMSELF. HIS CHOICES WERE ***SIMPLE***, BUT NOT ***EASY***...

...TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE, AND HOPE FOR HONOR IN THE NEXT, OR ***FLEE*** WITH SHEN TO ANOTHER COUNTRY AND TRY TO START A NEW LIFE.

HE CHOSE THE LATTER, TAKING ALONG WITH HIM A FEW BELONGINGS -- INCLUDING ***ME*** -- AND CAME WITH SHEN TO ***NEW YORK CITY***. HERE MY MASTER FORMED A MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL, AND ***PROSPERED***.

"MEANWHILE, IN JAPAN..."

NAGI...

"... NAGI'S FAMILY -- ESPECIALLY HIS ***YOUNGER*** BROTHER, ***SAKI*** -- WERE MOURNING HIS DEATH. THE SEVEN-YEAR-OLD SAKI VOWED ***VENGEANCE*** ON YOSHI. THE FOOT TOOK HOLD OF SAKI'S ***ANGER*** AND USED IT TO BEND HIM TO THEIR OWN PURPOSES. SAKI BEGAN INTENSIVE TRAINING IN THE ***NINJA'S ART***, AND SOON ***SURPASSED*** HIS TEACHERS. AS HE GREW OLDER, HIS HATRED OF YOSHI GREW ***DEEP*** AND ***BITTER***."

OROKU SAKI, YOU HAVE ***PROVEN*** YOURSELF. THOUGH YOU ARE ONLY ***EIGHTEEN***, YOU ARE OUR MOST CUNNING AND PROFICIENT ***ASSASSIN***...

... AND AN ABLE ***LEADER***. THEREFORE, WE HAVE CHOSEN YOU TO GO TO THE ***UNITED STATES*** AND LEAD THE NEW YORK BRANCH OF THE ***FOOT CLAN!***

AT ***LAST!*** A CHANCE TO ***AVENGE*** MY BROTHER'S ***DEATH!***

"SAKI MOVED ***QUICKLY***. WITHIN A YEAR HE HAD BUILT THE NEW YORK FOOT INTO A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH."

UNDER SAKI'S LEADERSHIP, THE FOOT WAS SOON DOMINANT IN MANY ***CRIMINAL*** ACTIVITIES, AMONG THEM ***DRUG SMUGGLING*** AND ***ARMS RUNNING***... AND THEIR SPECIALTY, ***ASSASSINATION***. SAKI, NOW CALLED "***THE SHREDDER***", WAS VERY ***SUCCESSFUL***... BUT NOT ***SATISFIED***. IN HIS DARK HEART BURNED A FIERCE ***HATRED*** FOR YOSHI AND SHEN.

ON A NIGHT NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, SAKI FINALLY MADE HIS ***MOVE***...

THE TIME IS RIGHT... I HAVE TRACKED THEM DOWN...

... FOR THE ***MURDERER*** OF MY BROTHER, THERE WILL BE ***NO*** ESCAPE!

"MY MASTER YOSHI CAME HOME THAT EVENING, ***NEVER*** EXPECTING THAT HIS ***MOST DANGEROUS*** ENEMY LAY IN WAIT. ENTERING THE APARTMENT, YOSHI'S GAZE FELL ON THE STILL, ***SILENT*** FORM OF HIS BELOVED SHEN..."

"... THEN... HE SAW HER ***KILLER***."

WHO -- ***WHO*** ARE YOU??!!

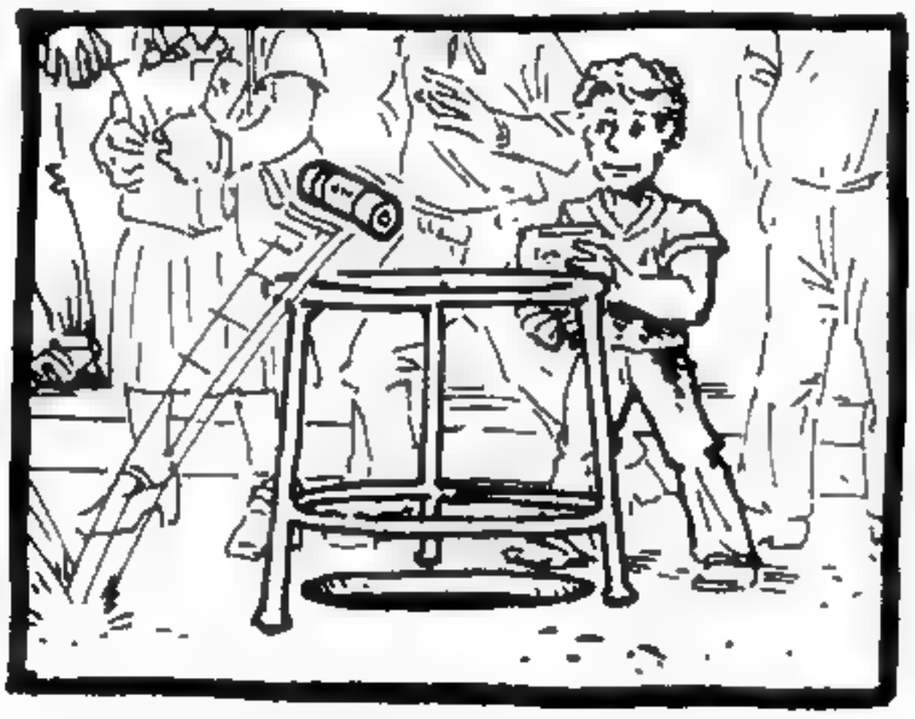
MEN CALL ME ***THE SHREDDER***... BUT ***YOU*** KNOW ME BY ***ANOTHER*** NAME... ***OROKU SAKI!***

OH ***NO***...!

"IN THE STRUGGLE, MY CAGE WAS ***SMASHED***. I WAS FREE... BUT MY MASTER WAS ***DEAD***. IN MY GRIEF, I WANDERED THE STREETS, LIVING ON SCRAPS OF ***GARBAGE*** AND FIGHTING OFF FERAL ***ALLEY CATS***..."

"THEN, ONE DAY, EVERYTHING ***CHANGED***. WHILE I WAS SEARCHING IN A TRASH CAN FOR MY NEXT MEAL, I WITNESSED A NEAR-ACCIDENT. AN OLD ***BLIND*** MAN CROSSING THE STREET WAS ALMOST RUN DOWN BY A LARGE ***TRUCK***..."

"... BUT AT THE LAST MOMENT, A YOUNG MAN ***LEAPED*** INTO THE STREET AND ***KNOCKED*** THE BLIND MAN OUT OF THE TRUCK'S PATH. AS THE TRUCK SCREECHED TO A JARRING STOP, A METAL ***CANNISTER*** BOUNCED OUT OF THE BACK OF THE TRUCK AND ***STRUCK*** THE YOUNG MAN..."



"UNNOTICED BY THE CROWD, THE CANISTER BOUNCED SEVERAL MORE TIMES, ULTIMATELY STRIKING AND ***SMASHING*** A BOY'S GLASS BOWL WHICH HELD FOUR SMALL ***TURTLES*** -- YOU FOUR, AS ***INFANTS***. ALONG WITH THE CANISTER, YOU FELL INTO AN OPEN MANHOLE. FORTUNATELY, A PILE OF DEAD LEAVES, OLD NEWSPAPERS, AND OTHER DETRITUS ***BROKE*** YOUR FALL... BUT THE CANISTER SPLIT OPEN, RELEASING A GLOWING GREEN ***OOZE*** WHICH COVERED YOUR BODIES AS YOU CRAWLED AROUND IN IT."

"I FOLLOWED YOU DOWN INTO THE STORM DRAIN, AND -- NOT KNOWING EXACTLY ***WHY*** -- GATHERED YOU UP IN A DISCARDED ***COFFEE CAN.***"

"I TOOK YOU TO MY ***BURROW*** AND CLEANED OFF AS MUCH OF THE ***GOO*** AS I COULD. IT WAS A ***MESSY*** JOB, AND I ALSO ENDED UP ***COVERED*** IN THE STRANGE SUBSTANCE."

"THE NEXT MORNING I AWOKE TO FIND THE CAN TIPPED OVER, AND THE FOUR OF YOU ***DOUBLED*** IN SIZE! SOMEHOW, THAT ***OOZE*** HAD AFFECTED YOUR GROWTH. AS I LEARNED LATER, IT HAD CHANGED ME ALSO... MAKING ME MORE ***INTELLIGENT,*** AND ***LARGER,*** AS WELL. BUT I DIDN'T GROW AS ***QUICKLY*** AS YOU DID..."

FASCINATING...!

"... WITHIN A YEAR, YOU HAD REACHED YOUR ***CURRENT*** SIZE. YOU FOLLOWED ME EVERYWHERE I WENT, THOUGH I DID NOT ALLOW YOU ***ABOVE*** GROUND -- I COULD NOT RISK YOUR BEING ***DISCOVERED.***"

"I WAS AMAZED AT HOW ***INTELLIGENT*** YOU SEEMED, BUT EVEN SO, I WAS ***NOT*** PREPARED FOR WHAT HAPPENED ONE DAY..."

SPLIN-TER?

"... ONE OF YOU ACTUALLY SAID A ***WORD*** -- MY ***NAME!***"

"***MORE*** WORDS FOLLOWED, AND SHORTLY YOU WERE ***ALL*** SPEAKING..."

RADICAL!

STAR TREK!

PIZZA?

MOTO GUZZI!

"SOON, YOU STARTED TO STAND ***UPRIGHT...***"

"... AND COPY MY ***MOVEMENTS...***"

I BEGAN ***TRAINING*** YOU THEN, TEACHING YOU ALL THAT I HAD LEARNED FROM WATCHING MASTER YOSHI. I TAUGHT YOU THE USE OF ***WEAPONS*** AND ***EMPTY-HANDS*** FIGHTING, THE ART OF ***STEALTH***, THE ETHICS OF THE ***WARRIOR CODE***, AND ALL THAT I KNEW OF THIS WORLD.

USING A BATTERED COPY OF A BOOK ON ***RENAISSANCE ART*** THAT I HAD FOUND IN THE STORM DRAIN, I HAD CHOSEN ***NAMES*** FOR EACH OF YOU...

"... LEONARDO..."

"... MICHELANGELO..."

"... DONATELLO..."

"... AND RAPHAEL."

NOW, MY SONS, I AM ***OLD***... AND THERE IS A ***TASK*** I WOULD HAVE YOU PERFORM BEFORE I LEAVE THIS WORLD. I MUST ASK YOU TO DO THAT WHICH ***NO*** BEING SHOULD ASK OF ANOTHER... I ASK YOU TO ***AVENGE*** THE CRUEL DEATH OF MY MASTER, HAMATO YOSHI, AND HIS BELOVED WIFE, TANG SHEN. I ASK YOU TO SEEK OUT, CHALLENGE, AND ***KILL*** THE MURDERER OROKU SAKI...
THE SHREDDER!!!

"AH, THE NIGHT AIR... I *LOVE* IT!"

"I *DESPISE* THE DANK, DARK UNDERGROUND. MY *BROTHERS* DON'T SEEM TO MIND IT...

... BUT *THIS* IS WHERE I BELONG. SUCH A FEELING OF *FREEDOM*, SO MUCH ROOM TO MOVE ABOUT!"

"I AM *RAPHAEL*, NINJA TURTLE... AND MASTER SPLINTER CHOSE *ME* FOR THIS TASK...

...TO DELIVER A MESSAGE OF *CHALLENGE* TO THE SHREDDER!"

"SPLINTER TOLD ME TO *INFILTRATE* THE SHREDDER'S HEADQUARTERS AND DELIVER A *CALLING CARD*..."

"MY PLEASURE!"

"TWO *GUARDS* ON THE *RIGHT*..."

"... ONE ON THE *LEFT*..."

"THEY'VE *ALL* GOT TO GO!"

"THEY'LL BE MY CALLING CARD!"

INTRUDER --!

STOP HIM!

"THEY'RE *ARMED*, OF COURSE..."

"THAT'S OKAY..."

"... I AM, TOO!"

HAI!

"THE THIRD GUARD SEES THE ACTION, BUT DOESN'T SOUND THE *ALARM* ..."

"... HE *PROBABLY* THINKS HE CAN TAKE ME OUT BY *HIMSELF*."

YOU! WHO ARE YOU?!

NINJA?

TURTLE!

"WE *CONNECT* IN MIDAIR..."

"... WHEN WE LAND, *I'M* STANDING..."

"... HE *ISN'T.*"

"NOW... TO MY *TASK!*"

"THE *MESSAGE* IS WRAPPED AROUND ONE OF MY *SAIS*..."

"I CAN SEE *OROKU SAKI* INSIDE, TALKING TO SOME *FLUNKIES*..."

"... IT'S AN *EASY* SHOT!"

SO YOU SEE, MR. MCCADAM, IT IS TO YOUR *ADVANTAGE*...

... TO HAVE MY ORGANIZATION'S *PROTECTION!*

HAI!

H-HEY --!

GOOD LORD! WHAT IS *THAT*!?

OROKU SAKI ALSO KNOWN AS THE SHREDDER YOU HAVE SHAMED AND DISHONORED THE NAME OF YOUR FAMILY BY MURDERING HAMATO YOSHI. I GIVE YOU THE CHANCE TO REGAIN YOUR HONOR. MEET MY FOUR STUDENTS FOR A DUEL TO THE DEATH TOMORROW NIGHT AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS: [illegible] STREET

MR. OROKU, IS *THIS* THE PROTECTION YOU WOULD HAVE US BUY? IF YOU CANNOT KEEP YOUR OWN COMPLEX *SECURE*...

OUTRAGEOUS!

... THEN WE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT YOUR *PROTECTION* IS *ANYTHING!*

WORTH

GOODBYE, SIR!

WHO CAN THIS CHALLENGE COME FROM? WHAT *FOOL* WOULD PIT HIS MINIONS AGAINST THE *MIGHT* OF THE *SHREDDER*?

IN THE END, IT DOESN'T MATTER... HIS *EFFRONTERY* WILL COME TO *GRIEF* SOON ENOUGH!

THERE *WILL* BE A DUEL, AND THERE WILL BE *DEATH*...

... *THEIRS!*

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...

... USE YOUR *CLIMBING CLAWS...*

... AND GO *SILENTLY!*

ARBEE
CONSTRUCTI

THIS IS IT, MY BROTHERS...

SHREDDER, WE ARE HERE!!!

SHREDDER! FACE US!

WHO *ARE* THESE FREAKISH *FOOLS*?

I STILL DO NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND WHY AFTER SO *LONG* THIS COMES BACK TO *HAUNT* ME...

... I KILLED YOSHI *FIFTEEN YEARS AGO!*

NO MATTER... MY MEN ARE IN PLACE...

... AND THE TIME IS NEAR.

I SHALL *FINISH* THIS BUSINESS -- *ONCE* AND FOR *ALL!*

SHREDDER! DO YOU FEAR US?!

I AM HERE...

... COME FACE YOUR *DOOM!!!*

FOOT... JOIN ME!

THESE GUYS ARE GOOD!

ARRG! A BIT TOO GOOD --!

BUT WE...

... ARE...

... BETTER!

HAI!

ALL YOUR *NINJA*... HAVE *FALLEN*, SHREDDER!

YES... SO I *SEE*...

... THEY WERE *GOOD* MEN... MY *BEST!*

I SEE, TOO, THAT THEY HAVE LEFT THEIR *MARK!*

BUT THAT WAS JUST ***STUDENTS*** FIGHTING ***STUDENTS***... NOW YOU MUST FACE A ***TEACHER*** -- A ***MASTER!***

COME! ***ONE*** AT A TIME, OR ***ALL*** AT ONCE, I DON'T CARE... FOR ONLY I WILL LEAVE HERE ***ALIVE!***

ME FIRST!

YAAG!

SHAK!

HAH! YOU LEFT YOURSELF ***WIDE OPEN!***

YOU ARE MUCH TOO ***SLOW!***

ARRG!

AMATEURS!!!

COME, KAPPA... YOUR BROTHERS HAVE FALLEN... YOU ARE NEXT!

YAAA!

UNGH!

BAH... FOUR FOOLS!

UNF! HE IS TOO ***SKILLED*** FOR US TO FIGHT ***ONE-ON-ONE***, BROTHERS! REMEMBER MASTER SPLINTER'S TEACHINGS -- USE ***GROUP*** TACTICS... AND HIT FROM A ***DISTANCE!***

UNH!

THUNK!

AGH!

THUP!

DODGE THESE, MASTER!

OOF!

CURSE YOU -- !

UGH!

HAI!

AGH!

THIS IS THE *END* FOR YOU, SHRED -- *UNH!*

KRAK!

UMPF

YOU ARE OVERLY *CONFIDENT*, FOOL...

PERHAPS HE IS, SHREDDER...

... BUT PERHAPS *NOT!*

NOW... YOU ARE *BEATEN.*

SO... *FINISH* IT, FOOLS! I AM... *HELPLESS*... SLAY ME *NOW!*

WE *TURTLES* ARE NOT DOGS WITHOUT *HONOR*...

... UNLIKE *YOU*, OROKU SAKI.

I WILL GRANT YOU ONE CHANCE... TO REDEEM YOUR *HONOR* ...

TAKE THIS BLADE... AND COMMIT *SEPPUKU!*

NEVER!

IF... I MUST... *KILL* MYSELF... I WILL... TAKE... ALL OF YOU... *TURTLES*... WITH ME!

THIS... *THERMITE GRENADE*... WILL WIPE... THIS ROOFTOP CLEAN... OF *ALL* LIFE... INCLUDING *YOU!*

NO!

IT'S *OVER*, MY BROTHERS...

... OUR *MISSION* IS ACCOMPLISHED... OUR MASTER'S MASTER IS *AVENGED!*

I'M *TIRED*, LEO...

YES... SO ARE WE ALL, MICHELANGELO. LET'S GO *HOME.*

UHH --! I *ACHE* ALL OVER!

... AND SOME *TEA*...

A HOT *BATH* WOULD BE NICE...

LEONARDO -- *LOOK!* THAT PIECE OF *ARMOR* ...

HMM... IT SEEMS THAT THE *SHREDDER*...

... HAS BEEN *SHREDDED!*

"WE ARE THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES..."

"... WE STRIKE HARD AND FADE AWAY..."

"...INTO THE NIGHT!"

THE END

Oddly enough I honestly do not believe, at the time, that I knew that Peter and Kevin were artists. At no time do I ever remember them even letting on a little bit that they were interested in becoming comic professionals. They were just two guys who loved to buy comics – good comics. Comics with taste (now-a-days, I long for the time when comics of bad taste were few and far between).

When Peter and Kevin brought me my first copy of The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, I was stunned. They gave me a copy, saying "look what we did." Who knew? I sure didn't. It was cool. Super cool. It paid homage to Frank Miller and Daredevil. It was fun. It was fresh. It was produced by friends. Sure, they had an investment in it and it was my obligation, as the local comic retailer, to help them make their money back.

There was time that you could walk into any shop in Somersworth/Dover, NH and find a copy of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1. It was everywhere. The Hallmark store, the magazine store, the bookstore... everyone had them on consignment. Peter and Kevin just wanted to show people what they had done and repay the money they had borrowed. We all knew the story and liked these guys enough to help.

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles were the springboard for my first comic book convention. Premiering at my "Portsmouth Mini-Con," in Portsmouth, NH, were The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Peter and Kevin did a poster for me. They took out an ad in the CBG. Peter and Kevin wanted to get the word out about their new comic venture. I hang my head in shame. I actually charged these guys for their table. When you stand in the presence of greatness will you recognize it?

Can you imagine owning 500 copies of The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1? I can because I did. Over a period of about 60 days, I purchased 500 copies of this book.

Locally, it was a hit. First small papers carried the news, and then big local ones. And there I sat with hundreds of these books. What does one do when he owns 500 copies of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1? He cuts them up and makes advertisements. He sends them out to associates. He gives them to friends and family. He tries to wholesale them and hopes he can recoup his investment. Peter and Kevin charged me between 60 and 90 cents a copy. I was happy to pay it, to help out my friends. Never had their been a greater sense of local pride for the Dover/Portsmouth comic book community.

Of those 500 copies, how many do I have left? Just prior to the TMNT beginning its rise to the top, I traded the last 100 copies that I owned for copies of another Mega Smash Hit that I needed at the time – The Elementals #1. If only hindsight was 20/20. For the record, if I could have held onto even 50 copies of the book and had them CGC graded at 9.8, today, all my children would be able to go to college on Peter and Kevin. If hindsight was 20/20.

Perhaps you've heard it said that "comic books are a truly unique American art form." If comics are truly the unique American art form, then the TMNT is the culmination, the apex, of that art form. What could be more American than two guys turning a sequential dream into an empire? What could be more American than having to beg and borrow (I can't imagine that they ever stole) only to become the kings of their media? I postulate that The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are the culmination of that art form and Peter and Kevin represent the American potential. What could be more American than pursuing a comic book dream from a one bedroom apartment? What could be more American than having to beg and borrow to make your dream come true? What could be more American than creating an merchandise frenzy from an idea?

Bragging rights – there is nothing better than bragging rights. Even if your friends think you're crazy. Even if your family doesn't believe in you. No one can take away the personal value of your bragging rights.

When I tell my kids that I know the guys that created the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles they look at me like I'm crazy. In their eyes there are no such persons. The Turtles have always been and will ever be. When I tell my friends that I was there they say 'Coawabunga Dude' and ignore me. Will you know greatness when it is standing next you? I did – I just didn't know how great it could be.

I don't think I will ever be able to express the sense of pride I have at having been a very small part of such a great thing. I've got Turtle bragging rights – not many people can say that. In the history of comic books no one has accomplished what Peter and Kevin have. Never will it be done again.

-- Ralph DiBernardo / April 2005

SALUD.
TO THE MINUTE-MEN.
PAST, PRESENT...
...AND FUTURE.
Heine
BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE BASTARD & THE SAINT